

# USS Reuben James changes hands

By Ens. Rolando Salvatierra

*USS REUBEN JAMES*

The USS Reuben James (FFG 57) held a traditional change of command ceremony recently, welcoming Cmdr. Carl W. Cramb, a 1981 graduate of the Naval Academy.

The ceremony was conducted shortly after sunrise with the scenic coastline of Hawaii in the background. This time honored event was traditionally held on the decks of sailing ships and in front of the entire crew. This action was designed to ensure the crew was fully aware of who was in charge of the welfare of the ship's company.

On this particular day the ceremony was conducted just as it was in the days of sail- underway and with the crew standing tall.

Cramb is relieving Cmdr. Steven L. Richter, who provided the crew with unique insight into this change of command when he stated: "What makes this change of command so special is to turnover with a company mate, a classmate and friend".

Unbeknownst to the crew, the incoming and outgoing commanding officers spent four years together at the Naval Academy, in the same company. They renewed a friendship which started 23 years ago on July 6, 1977.

Richter's next duty assignment is in Washington D.C. on the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations staff.

Cramb will continue Reuben James' preparation for their deployment in May.



file photo

USS Reuben James' (FFG 57) crewmembers welcomed Cmdr. Carl W. Cramb aboard during a change of command ceremony recently. Cramb is relieving Cmdr. Steven L. Richter. Reuben James' Sailors are currently preparing the ship for a deployment in May.

## Louisville Sailors welcome aboard new CO

By USS Louisville Public Affairs

USS Louisville (SSN 724), a fast-attack submarine based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, held a change of command ceremony recently as Cmdr. Russ Janicke relieved Cmdr. Joseph Skinner.

Guest speaker at the ceremony, Rear Adm. Al Konetzni, Jr., Commander Submarine Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, stressed the importance of strength in command.

"No amount of explanation can alter their placement of ultimate responsibility, whether for success or failure, squarely on the shoulders of the man in command," said

Konetzni. "[Cmdr. Skinner's] success has allowed us to advertise the value of submarines with credibility. The submarine force is clearly blessed with great people - and the USS Louisville is no exception," added Konetzni.

During his two-year tour as commanding officer of USS Louisville, Skinner increased retention and initiated public service programs with local schools.

"One of the greatest privileges as an American is to lead Americans, and the pinnacle of these leadership positions is leading submarine Sailors," said Skinner. "They are the elite, they are winners, they are the epit-

ome of what is good in our nation, and it has been an honor to be the commanding officer of the best of the breed - the USS Louisville," he said.

Cmdr. Janicke, the Chicago, Ill. native, took command of the submarine on Friday, Feb. 18.

"I know I cannot succeed in command without the help of my crew. They're an outstanding group of professional Sailors who represent the best and brightest our nation has to offer," said Janicke. "I look forward to working with and getting to know each and every one of them in the years ahead," added Janicke.

USS Louisville, which is 360 feet in length and displaces over 6,900 tons when submerged, has a crew of 130 men.

The submarine force will continue to shrink from as many as 40 submarines in the early 1990's to only 25 early in the next decade. Demand for submarines in support of specific national tasking has more than doubled since the end of the Cold War.

Louisville is a Los Angeles-class submarine and was commissioned in November of 1986. The submarine is a member of Submarine Squadron Three based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and is the fourth U.S. Navy vessel to bear the name.

## COMSUBPAC 1999 battle "E" winners announced

By J03 McClain Shewman

*SUBPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

Winners of the 1999 Battle Efficiency "E" award for the Submarine Forces, Pacific have recently been named. USS Buffalo (SSN 715) (Commander Submarine Squadron One), USS Asheville (SSN 758) (COMSUBRON Three), and USS Cheyenne (SSN 773) (COMSUBRON Seven), all attack submarines based out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, have been awarded the Battle "E" for their respective squadrons by Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMSUBPAC).

According to Rear Adm. Al Konetzni, COMSUBPAC, "The competition for battle efficiency awards was extremely tough this year, and these guys are the best of the best of the best."

The purpose of the efficiency award is to recognize commands which were evaluated during the past year that have attained the highest overall or departmental readiness

to carry out their wartime tasks.

"The Battle "E" aside, I am even more proud of the outstanding crew we have on Buffalo. Not only did they do an absolutely superb job operating the ship in numerous challenging and demanding scenarios, their advancement progress was the best I have ever seen," said Cmdr. "Buffalo" Bob Hennegan, commanding officer of USS Buffalo.

"In 1999 Buffalo reenlisted 25 first-term Sailors, had eight first class petty officers advance to Chief, and advanced 60 Sailors. In addition, four Buffalo crewmembers were selected for Officer

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- Rear Adm. Al Konetzni  
COMSUBPAC

Commissioning programs," added Hennegan, native of New London, Conn.

USS Cheyenne Chief-of-the-Boat (COB), MM-CS(SS) Larry Franklin from Torrington, WY., emphasized how the crew was responsible for winning the Battle "E".

"Without a doubt, Cheyenne is the most professional and outgoing crew I've worked with," said Franklin.

"Everything is about attitude with this crew. It doesn't matter how bad something goes, they keep charging. They don't let anything get them down.

"Every time we give a tour,

I ask the guests what they thought of the whole event. Every person mentions the crew's attitude. In a tactical situation, staying positive and never giving up makes the ship successful," Franklin added.

Among the other accolades, USS Cheyenne won the Submarine Squadron Seven Tactical "T" and the Silver Anchor for 1999.

"I want people to know that [the crew] is wonderful. I wish I could get every crewmember's name up for recognition. Every single Sailor has played an important role in Cheyenne winning the Battle "E". The submarine is nothing but a shell without the crew," said Franklin.

According to Hennegan, "SUBPAC and Squadron One's emphasis on Sailor quality of life has had a huge positive impact on our efforts to retain these outstanding Sailors. It's very rewarding on this 100th anniversary of the U.S. Submarine Force to be a part of the great SUBPAC team we have out here in the Pacific."

## Patrol Squadron Nine is first of Millennium to fly into Hong Kong



file photo

Combat Aircrew Three of Patrol Squadron Nine (VP-9) had the experience of flying America's first mission of the Millennium into Hong Kong, China.

By Lt.j.g. Todd Copeland

*VP-9*

On Jan. 20, Combat Aircrew Three of Patrol Squadron Nine (VP-9), flew the United States' first mission of the Millennium into Hong Kong, China.

The mission was designed to exercise the ability of the United States to routinely operate military aircraft into and out of Hong Kong as well as show the flag in that area of responsibility.

The opportunity allowed the crew some time to see and explore one of the greatest cities of the Far East. Though only in Hong Kong for a short time, the crew did its best to absorb the beauty of the city as well as learn about its history.

Turned over to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong has been under British possession for nearly 157 years. Following the First Opium War in 1842, England took possession of the coastal city and maintained it until agreeing in a 1984 Joint Declaration that Hong Kong would be returned to China in 1997.

On July 1, 1997, Hong Kong became a Special

Administrative Region (SAR) of The People's Republic of China. Under the SAR agreement, the Chinese government, agreed to allow Hong Kong to practice autonomy for a period of 50 years.

Since the turn over of Hong Kong to China, flights in and out of the city have been sparse. Launching from Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, 1,000 miles from Hong Kong, Combat Aircrew Three, led by Lt. Mike "Pappy" Plowman, was eager to visit this exotic city.

Greeted on the radio by British accredited controllers who quickly and efficiently steered the aircrew into one of the world's busiest airports, Crew Three received a warm welcome.

Whisked around the airport on a guided tour of the facilities, the crew had time for some quick shopping, lunch, and then back to the plane for the return trip to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan.

The crew agreed that the entire experience was a whirlwind, but also quite memorable.

Cmdr. Earl Hampton, Jr., commanding officer of the Golden Eagles, commented, "In today's ever changing environment, it is an honor and a privilege to be able to take an American aircraft into Hong Kong. Exciting events such as these show some of the positive diplomatic advances that have been made over time."